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**For Immediate Release**

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**County Wrestling With \$7.5 Million Deficit**

Proposed Elimination of Citizen Programs Considered June 7

**Colorado Springs, June 1, 2007** - The Board of County Commissioners will be discussing proposed reductions to balance the 2008 county budget at its June 7 meeting. Board meetings begin at 9 a.m. and are in the third floor hearing room, 27 East Vermijo Avenue.

For 2008, the county is facing a \$7.5 million deficit due to state and other mandates, and at work sessions on May 17 and 31, staff discussed with the Board options to cover this deficit and balance next year's El Paso County budget. At the June 7 meeting, the Board will give staff direction as to what cuts and reductions it wants to implement, and staff will then bring back a preliminary budget for acceptance by the Board on June 25.

"Unfortunately, we will have to cut programs and services that will directly impact the community. However, while doing this we do have two main objectives. One is to maintain public safety and health and the second is to protect our human capital, which are our employees," said Chair Dennis Hisey.

One of the proposed solutions is to cut \$4.3 million from Administrative Service Departments. These are the external departments, such as the Parks and Transportation, as well as internal support departments such as Information Technologies that provide direct support to other departments and the elected officials including the Sheriff, District Attorney, Coroner, Assessor, Clerk and Recorder, Surveyor, Treasurer, and the gubernatorial appointed Public Trustee.

"Some of these departments have a more public face. People use parks so they understand what that department does. However, several of these departments are internal and provide services that most folks don't necessarily see, but even cuts to them will impact the public. For example, we have already and may need to make cuts in the Fleet Management Department. One of this department's duties is to repair, replace and maintain equipment that our Transportation Department uses to fix and plow our roads. Cuts will mean longer times that the equipment is in the shop and off

the roads, which could result in longer times it takes to fix potholes and clear snow from our county roads," said Commissioner Wayne Williams.

Another proposed option is to cut \$969,307 in funding that the county provides to its Department of Human Services (DHS). Local funding provided to DHS is matched by state and federal dollars, so this will actually equate to an approximate \$3,266,785 cut in funding to DHS, much of which may be cut from child support services.

"DHS is already struggling to keep pace with the growth our county is seeing, and these cuts will continue to reduce or eliminate services and programs our citizens depend upon, such as child protection services," said Commissioner Sallie Clark who also serves as liaison to the department and a member of the state's Child Welfare Allocations Committee. "El Paso County now has the largest population and the highest number of calls on child abuse reporting in the state of Colorado. And, despite the fact we have surpassed Denver in this regard, El Paso County will fall further behind Denver by approximately \$24 million in projected 2008 state child welfare funding. Additional local cuts to DHS, translates to less available state and federal matching funds for El Paso County. It's become a grave concern for the county, and especially so because of the impact on our littlest and most vulnerable citizens as it relates to our child protection services."

The public is encouraged to attend the upcoming public hearings and can also visit [www.elpasoco.com](http://www.elpasoco.com) for more information on the county's budget.